

CRTC to review Nunavut, N.W.T., Yukon satellite internet pricing

Nunavut group says national target for higher internet speeds doesn't go far enough

By Guy Quenneville, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 14, 2015 12:21 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 14, 2015 4:10 PM CT

The CRTC says it will publicly review the maximum price satellite operator Telesat can charge companies such as Northwestel and SSI Micro for satellite connectivity in Nunavut and parts of the N.W.T. and Yukon.

The decision comes after [a report](#) commissioned by the regulator found that prices for fixed satellite services (FSS) elsewhere in the country are well below the top price Telesat can charge internet service providers for FSS in the territories.

"How long will satellite-served communities have to make do with that level of service while the rest of the world improves by leaps and bounds?"- Oana Spinu, Nunavut Broadband Development Corporation

FSS is what SSI Micro and Northwestel use to provide internet to residential and business customers in remote communities without a fibre optic connection — communities such as Old Crow, Yukon; Paulatuk, N.W.T., and all of Nunavut.

The report also found that internet speeds in those communities are slower than those available in fibre communities, and that Telesat will likely remain the "dominant provider" of satellite services in the territories "for the foreseeable future."

"In light of the above, the commission hereby initiates a proceeding to review the [fixed satellite service] price ceiling," the CRTC announced last week.

Not good enough, says one group

But the Nunavut Broadband Development Corporation says that a lowering of the price ceiling, while providing short-term relief, still won't go far enough.

"Lowering the price ... is not a long-term solution to the North's telecommunication issues," says Oana Spinu, the corporation's executive director.

"It would only support legacy technology meeting an arguably outdated target."

The outdated target Spinu is referring to is the nationwide target speed established in 2011 by the CRTC: 5 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloading and 1 Mbps for uploading.

The CRTC-commissioned report found that internet speeds in most satellite communities are below that target.

"How relevant is that target now when the Canadian household average is 29.7 Mbps download, according to [the Ookla Net Index](#), or when the FCC has set their definition of broadband to 25 Mbps, or when the EU has a 30 Mbps target for 100 per cent of EU citizens?" says Spinu.

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This isn't the first time the CRTC has looked into wholesale internet service in the North. In 2013 the regulator ordered Northwestel — which owns most of the fibre optic infrastructure used to deliver internet in the N.W.T. and the Yukon — to lower the wholesale internet prices it charges competing internet service providers such as SSI Micro.

As part of its review of Telesat's pricing, the CRTC is inviting the public to submit comments. Those comments are due by Aug. 21.